SARON MONTHLY NEWSLETTER

Saron Evangelical Lutheran Church (ELCA)
510 Main Street
St. Joseph, MI 49085

Website: www.saronlutheran.org
Email: info@saronlutheran.org
Phone: 269-983-1273
Facebook:www.facebook.com/saronlutheranchurchst.joseph

Saron's Mission: ***Joyfully sharing God's love for all!!!***

Reverend James E. Smith, Pastor
Cell: 269-816-3870
Email: pastorjames@saronlutheran.org

Amanda Bradley, Admin Assistant
Cell: 419-306-5780
Email: info@saronlutheran.org
bradley717@gmail.com

Marcus Roll, Music Director
Email: roll1mc@gmail.com

Irma Gorman, Organist
Email: pianoladyijg@yahoo.com

Ken Boyd, Bookkeeper
Email: financial@saronlutheran.org

Sara Porter, Childcare Specialist
Email: portersara20@gmail.com

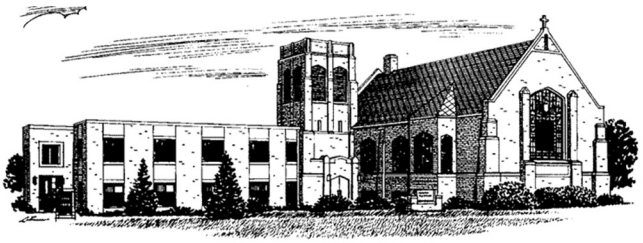
Typical Sunday at Saron:

Fall, Winter and Spring (**began Sept 8**):
8:30am Worship On-Location
9:40am Learning Hour for Ages 3-Adult
11am Worship with Zoom Option
Nursery Available

Summer Schedule (begins May 25, 2025):
10am Worship
On-Location and via Zoom
Nursery Available
No Learning Hour

We hold in prayer:
The Rev. Elizabeth Eaton,
Presiding Bishop, ELCA
The Rev. Dr. Craig Satterlee, Bishop of the
North/West Lower Michigan Synod, ELCA
The Episcopal Diocese of the Great Lakes

Our Companion Synods:
Christian Lutheran Church of Honduras
Lutheran Church of Papua New Guinea
Lutheran Church of Latvia



From the Desk of Pastor James

Peace be with you! My name is Pastor James Smith, and I am excited to join Saron! I am a pastor because I believe that the Gospel of Jesus is joyful Good News that changes lives.

Growing up in Midland, I was the kid who always loved church. My first stole was handmade by my mom for me to play Zechariah in my Lutheran school's Nativity play—nonspeaking role. I first discerned the Holy Spirit calling me to ordained ministry when I was attending American University (DC) and discovered my greatest joy worshiping, studying, and serving with my local church St. Paul's.

I enrolled at the seminary at Gettysburg where, after four years including an internship in Boone, NC, I graduated with honors in Old Testament and Reformation Studies. And better still! I met the love of my life (now-Pastor) Nicole Smith in my senior year; we married on May 21, 2016. Pr. Nicole serves at Hope Lutheran in Plainwell and soon Trinity Episcopal in Three Rivers, as well.

For my first four years, I served at Resurrection Lutheran Church in Madison, IN, an idyllic town on the Ohio River. For the last six years, I have been honored to serve at Trinity Episcopal and St. John's Lutheran Churches in Three Rivers, where we currently live.

While in TR, our family grew. We adopted two cats: a lean, gray cat named Doc and a black and "more robust" cat named Benny. In 2020, our first son Titus was born and in 2022, Timothy followed. Titus is the self-proclaimed greatest baseball player in the world (at only 4 years old!), and Timothy is the slyest heart-stealer I have ever met—his mom describes him as a flirt, and when you see his eyelashes you will know why. Both are adorable and wonderful, and you will meet them soon!

My interests include running, reading (especially history), gardening, community theater, and sports (UM and Detroit teams; someday I hope to ask God why I was born a Lions fan).

I believe that one of my strengths as a pastor is creating and feeding a sense of community, and so I cannot wait to meet you and hear your stories. Thank you for the warm welcome and for inviting me to serve Christ and our neighbors alongside you!

Yours in Christ,
Pr. James

General Information

OFFICE HOURS

Pastor James Smith
Monday – Thursday
Hours may vary. Appointments are great!
Amanda Bradley (Admin Assistant):
Mondays & Thursdays 10am-2pm
Ken Boyd (Bookkeeper):
Thursday Mornings and by Appointment
Helping Hands Office Volunteers:
Wednesdays 9:00am-11am (approx)

If you or your loved one is need of a visit or pastoral care, please contact Pastor James at 269-816-3870.

Specific questions or concerns may be directed to an appropriate council member or committee liaison:
President – Fran Bolson
Vice President – Erik Bergh
Secretary – Claudia Staude
Treasurer – Ed Brunner
Worship – Merilyn Frey
Learning – Fran Bolson or Scott Gaspari
Outreach – Jim Manore
Facilities – Steve Cook or Ed Brunner
Youth – Chuck Knebl
Support – Jim Manore or Ed Brunner
Hospitality – Merrily Smith or Claudia Staude

Caring and Sharing

IN OUR PRAYERS

Tom Taylor is at Caretel in St. Joseph;

Happy Birthday Wishes to Saron's Members!

4/1 Shadden Gulley
4/1 Susan Harris
4/3 Landen Alexander
4/3 Brian Culverhouse
4/4 Shawn de la Foret
4/4 Elizabeth Gaspari
4/4 Elise Olson
4/4 Margot Olson
4/5 Brighton Hooper
4/8 Janet Larson
4/9 Scott Kohs
4/11 Alaina Bradley
4/13 Marilyn Lucy
4/14 Lorelei Gorman
4/15 Corrine Ondraka
4/19 Bob Kynast
4/20 Claudia Staude
4/21 Fritz Knauf
4/22 Addison Osgood
4/23 Juliet Jacob
4/23 Ava Osgood
4/25 Clementine Brueck
4/25 Gayle Peterson
4/26 Michael Breyen
4/26 Thomas Siewert
4/27 Linda Pater
4/28 Brooke Henderson

Happy Anniversary Wishes to Saron's Members!

4/16 Kathi & Terry Anserello

"God's Blessings for a very happy day and year round!"

If there are any omissions from the birthday or anniversary list, or if a date is incorrect, please let us know so we can get it correct in the future!

Pastor James' 1st Sunday! March 23, 2025

Regardless of what it was like outside, it sure felt like a beautiful spring morning in the sanctuary as we welcomed Pastor James to Saron. NOTE: for those that like to follow along or would like to go over it again later, there will be copies of Pastor James' sermon on the table outside the sanctuary each week.

FORTIFY & fly

We need your help with phase 2 of the inspirational mural in the Teen Lounge! Watch for a poster in the narthex for collecting words of encouragement from the congregation that we will add with paint pens to fully achieve the graffiti vibe we are going for. Words have power – let's use them to uplift our youth!

The contract and permit application has been signed for the new signage to be installed on the outside of the building (alley side). Adding this lettering and a cross with the ELCA logo will bring attention to the doors that we now use as the front entrance, especially for those new to the area or for guests at weddings/funerals. We also intend to put smaller lettering on the glass on/near the doors with information such as the pastor's name and service times to make it look more professional and welcoming.

Worship

NEW: ASSISTED HEARING DEVICES

Our new sound system in the sanctuary came with headphones to assist those having difficulty hearing the worship service. If you are interested, ask Marcus if you can try one out.

SENSORY BAGS

As part of extending an unconditional welcome to all, we have Sensory Bags available for use. These bags contain a variety of fidgets that can help someone feel more able to sit quietly and/or focus. We also have noise canceling headphones for those who are sound sensitive. These brightly colored bags can be found in the narthex.

PRAYER GROUP

You are invited to offer your prayer petitions (concerns or thanksgivings) via our attendance cards each Sunday. Requests can also be made online via a link in our Thursday email. You may include as much, or little, detail as you wish. Requests are then given to the Monday prayer group. **You are invited to be part of this Monday group at noon.** We follow a simple format of morning prayer and insert the petitions and prayers for Saron's ministry and the world. You don't even have to pray aloud, if you would prefer to pray quietly. Most weeks we are done in 30 minutes.

ALTAR FLOWERS

Sponsor a week by using the link in the weekly email or by contacting the church office. Please note any occasion/thanksgiving to be recognized in the bulletin. **Flowers are now $40 per vase.** Checks are payable to Saron with "Flowers" as the memo. Take them home to enjoy then please **return the vase.**

Nursery

Nursery service is available during worship. In order to utilize the space most effectively, this option is primarily directed towards our youngest members and guests. For preschoolers that need more physical and/or emotional space, activities are available in the narthex, including clipboards with coloring pages and children's bulletins. **It's vital to embrace family units in all stages and as such, we gladly welcome wiggles and giggles in worship!**

The goal of the nursery is to provide a safe environment to facilitate a meaningful worship experience for families. We recognize that may not look the same for all and encourage sharing concerns and suggestions with Marilyn Lucy (269/759-3464). We can also use more volunteers!

SUNDAY SCRIPTURE READINGS

As you prepare for worship, you are invited to read and reflect on the Scriptures for the day.

April 6: 5th Sunday in Lent
Isaiah 43:16-21
Psalm 126
Philippians 3:4b-14
John 12:1-8

April 13: Palm Sunday
Isaiah 50:4-9a
Psalm 31:9-16
Philippians 2:5-11
Luke 22:14 — 23:56

April 20: Easter Sunday
Acts 10:34-43
Psalm 118:1-2, 14-24 (24)
1 Corinthians 15:19-26
Luke 24:1-12

April 27: 2nd Sunday of Easter
Acts 5:27-32
Psalm 118:14-29
Revelation 1:4-8
John 20:19-31

YOUTH GROUP

Due to the sheer number of events we continue to have related to the 150th Anniversary, we've decided to wait until this coming winter to have our annual Fiesta bar & pool party. We hope to see everyone at the Easter Pancake Breakfast! Sunday school age kids will have a craft and egg hunt. Older kids can help hide the eggs!

Youth Group (middle school & high school age) typically meets once per month after the late service for food, fun and fellowship.

Contact Scott at scottgaspari@outlook.com with any questions or to be added to the email list.

Learning

Saron is a congregation seeking to become more fluent in the first language of faith, the language of Scripture, in order that we might live into our calling as a people renewed, enlivened, empowered and sent by the Word.

We have many educational options to fit your needs and schedule. Always feel welcome to join us, at any time and for as many sessions as works for you.

SUNDAY LEARNING HOUR

We have opportunities for many ages and stages!

The Sunday Learning Hour (9:40am-10:30am) offers the following options:

- Preschool - Grade 5: Sunday School
- Grades 6-8: Confirmation Classes
- High School - Adult: Adult Forum

THURSDAY MORNING BIBLE STUDY

The Thursday morning Bible study is wrapping up their study of *Joseph, the Journey to Forgiveness.* This group meets weekly from **9:30am-11am in the upstairs lounge**. Contact Colleen Lundgren at 269/921-4873 or colleenkl@icloud.com with any questions.

TUESDAY EVENING BIBLE STUDY

Following Easter, we will resume meeting on Tuesday, April 22. Our new study is the book, *"Why? Looking at God, evil and personal suffering"* by Sharon Dirckx (2021).

Why do bad things happen in our world? In this award-winning book, the scientist author explores some of the most agonizing and bewildering questions we all ask. With warmth and insight, she offers advice to help us cope with suffering as well as difficulties, and interweaves her own experiences and the personal stories of individuals who have faced some of life's toughest challenges, showing us that it is possible to believe in a powerful loving God and acknowledge the reality of evil and suffering.

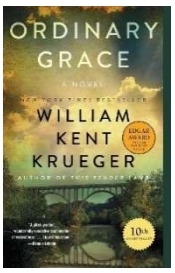
The book is available from Amazon and other retailers. Make sure to get the 2021 version with green & white cover.

We meet Tuesday evenings at 6pm in the upstairs lounge for one hour, then adjourn to a local restaurant for food and fellowship. **All are welcome!**

If you have any questions, feel free to call, text, or email
Don Hafer (269/985-3637, haferdon@gmail.com)
Ed Staude (636/288-1016, staude.edmund@gmail.com)
Eric Standen (269/759-3556, dande-standen@sbcglobal.net)

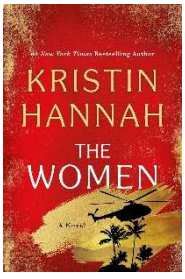
BOOK CLUB

Join us on April 6 at 6:30pm in the upstairs lounge, to discuss *Ordinary Grace* by popular author William



Kent Kruger. Looking back at a tragic event when he was thirteen, main character Frank Drum explores how a complicated web of secrets, adultery and betrayal shattered his Methodist family and their small Minnesota community.

Then on May 4, we will finish our season with the highly praised *The Women* by Kristin Hannah. It's an epic tale of coming of age in a dangerous time amidst a divided nation. In 1965, twenty-year-old Frances McGrath joins the Army Nurse Co rps to follow her



brother to Vietnam. She becomes one of the lucky, the brave, the broken and the lost that comes home to a country that wants to forget Vietnam. Women can be heroes, too! Come explore these intriguing novels with us. All are welcome at any of our meetings. A good discussion is guaranteed without fail. Questions? Please contact Kathy Cowall (269) 428-0354 or kcowall@hotmail.com.

FORUM & fellowship

With the season of Lent upon us, Forum & Fellowship will be pausing until after Easter. At that point we will resume our look at *The Amen Effect; Ancient Wisdom to Mend Our Broken Hearts and World* as we finish up studying how we can be joyfully sharing God's love with all. Hope to see you at the remaining Wednesday soup suppers and evening worships.

Contact Ed Staude at 636/288-1016 with any questions.

Women of the ELCA

DEBORAH CIRCLE

Due to a scheduled Lenten service, Deborah Circle will NOT meet in April. We will be participating in a service project which will be detailed in a group email to be sent soon.

Contact Melanie at 269/449-8399 with any questions.

Hospitality

SUNDAY SNACKS

Who doesn't love a snack during a time of fellowship in the narthex? If you would like to be a Sunday snack host, sign up via the link in our weekly email or call/email the office so Amanda can sign you up. Please plan for at least 30 to partake. Thank you!

Outreach

THE BENTON HARBOR SOUP KITCHEN™ HEART-TO-HEART™

For I was hungry and you gave me food.
I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink.
I was a stranger and you welcomed me.
-Matthew 25:35

On February 27, Saron members Jim Manore, Marilyn Frey, Deb Standen and Sandra Cunningham were busy at the Benton Harbor Soup Kitchen preparing & serving lunch. Guests enjoyed a ham meal which included rice, coleslaw, fruit, pickles, bread & homemade cookies. Thanks to our cookie bakers Kathi Anserello & Marilyn Frey. If you are able to help with the prep and serving or by providing cookies, please use the link in the weekly email or contact Kathie Bradley at 269-921-4665.

Thank you to all who continue to support this ministry with your time, contributions, and prayers.
Joyfully sharing God's love for all!

NOISY OFFERING

ELCA WORLD HUNGER

We receive a noisy offering
(or those not-so-noisy bills)
on the first Sunday of each month.
These gifts are sent to
ELCA World Hunger.

Thank you for your continued support!

Interfaith Action

Interfaith Action (swmichiganinterfaith.org) is a coalition of over 40 faith communities in Allegan, Berrien, Cass, St. Joseph, and Van Buren Counties. Some members of Saron attend meetings and work with various task force groups. One of the goals of Interfaith Action is to promote understanding and respect for diversity.

The first step in getting involved, is getting informed. Register to receive their communications at https://swmichinterfaith.org/contact1

EYE GLASS COLLECTION

Do you have old glasses sitting in a drawer? Lions Club has provided a collection box in the narthex. We have several members who are Lions that can deliver our glasses to the club where they will do more good. Thank you!

INCLUSIVITY TASK FORCE

The Inclusivity Task Force is committed to extending a welcome to all. Our congregation adopted the following welcome statement and is a **Reconciling in Christ** church.

As a community of faith who *joyfully shares God's love for all*, we believe our lives and faith are strengthened by diversity. We strive to be a community who welcomes people of every ability, age, citizenship status, ethnicity, gender identity and expression, language, marital status, political perspective, race, and sexual orientation. We are committed to the work of racial equity. Whatever life's circumstance, we openly welcome and value you. We celebrate God's unconditional love and respond joyfully to your presence here. All are welcome. You are welcome.

If you ever have any questions on our inclusivity journey, please feel free to call any one of the task force members:

Lindsay Gaspari: 847/373-8826 or lindsay.gaspari@yahoo.com

Support

The Support Committee typically meets the Tuesday before the third Monday of the month at 8pm via Zoom. Contact Don Hafer with any questions at 269/985-3637.

STOCK DONATIONS

Saron partners with a brokerage firm to accept stock donations. If you would like to donate stock, email Ed Brunner at ebrunner54@gmail.com to receive more information. Thanks!

Facilities

HELPING HANDS (Previously Golden Hammers)

We do all sorts of things from building maintenance to preps for worship in the sanctuary to assembling bulletins and newsletters and so much more. We meet on Wednesdays around 9am and know you are invited – whatever your age, gender, or ability. There is a job for you to use your helping hands.

Miscellaneous Bits of News

Prayer Labyrinth

Our beautifully embellished canvas prayer labyrinth will once again be available for walking during Lent, through **Saturday morning, April 19.** It will be set up in the upstairs lounge with various candles to help provide an atmosphere conducive to prayer and contemplation. You may visit before or after services on Wednesdays, Sundays, or any time the building is open for various activities or Bible studies. If you aren't sure when that is or would like to come at a specific time when the building is normally locked, contact **Kathy Bergh at 906/290-3346.**

Mark your calendar! Our annual Women's Retreat is back! It will be held on **Saturday, May 3 from 9am to 4pm** at the home of Linda Pater. Our speaker for the day will be Kate Ulrey.

The cost of the day is $15, which will cover breakfast and a late lunch. Along with the lesson, we will have music and free time to enjoy each other's company. This is a wonderful time to get to know each other better. All are welcome! There is a sign-up sheet in the narthex. If you have any questions, feel free to call **Linda at 269/369-1178.**

Saron Lutheran Church

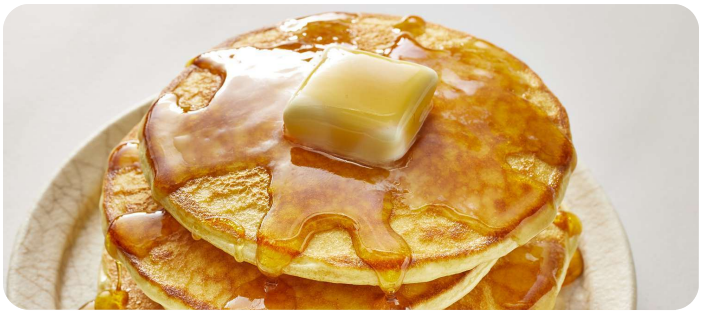
1875 | 150th Anniversary | 2025

Generations of Serving & Sharing God's Love

Make new memories while we commemorate our past! Plan to attend as many events as possible and please let the lead of each subcommittee know if you'd like to help with the planning and implementation. We will update this list as it evolves.

March 30 at Noon: Trivia Event

Lead: Scott Gaspari



April 20: Easter Pancake Breakfast

Lead: Merrily Smith

May 10: Blossomtime Parade

Hot Dog Lunch Lead: Judi Huff

SOUTH BEND CUBS

June 20: South Bend Cubs Game

Lead: Kristen Harper

Let Amanda know ASAP if you did not reserve tickets but would still like to go. We *might* be able to help.

July 13: Group Photo

Lead: Scott Gaspari

August 10: Anniversary Celebration

Worship Service Lead: Marcus Roll
Meal Deco & Program Lead: Kristen Harper

We will have a celebratory worship with Bishop Craig Satterlee at 10am, followed by a dinner at Union + Social, a beautiful venue in St. Joseph.

Commemorative Project

Lead: Marilyn Lucy

New Church Photo Directory

Lead: Kathie Bradley

Nearly 90 individuals were photographed during our 2 photo days! Couldn't make it? There will be a make-up day in May.

Every family photographed will receive a free 8x10. There is NO obligation to buy anything. Directories will also be free once they are ready.

History Research, Documenting & Presenting

Lead: Kate Ulrey

Watch for emails asking for your stories! There will also be new posters with historical information appearing in the narthex throughout the year and trivia during announcements every other week. We will put as much of Saron's history as we can fit in the new directory.

Installation

SARON LUTHERAN CHURCH
510 MAIN STREET
ST. JOSEPH, MI 49085

Website: saronlutheran.org
Email: info@saronlutheran.org

A Congregation of:
The North/West Lower Michigan Synod
Evangelical Lutheran Church in America

APRIL 2025 NEWSLETTER

HOLY WEEK

PALM SUNDAY

April 13 8:30am & 11am

EXCITEMENT

MAUNDY THURSDAY

April 17 12:15pm & 7pm

CONFUSION

GOOD FRIDAY

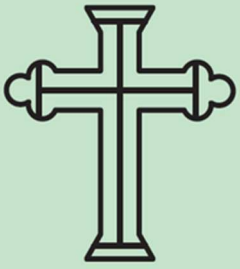
April 18 12:15pm & 7pm

DESPAIR

EASTER VIGIL

April 19 7pm

HOPE



EASTER SUNDAY

April 20 8:30am & 11am

JOY

Our 11am and 7pm worship services will also be available via Zoom.
There will be an Easter Pancake Breakfast between services with Youth Activities/Egg Hunt beginning around 10:15am.

APRIL 2025

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
		1	**2** 9am Helping Hands 6:15pm Soup Supper 7pm Lent Worship	**3** 9:30am Bible Study 6pm Bells Rehearsal 7pm Choir Rehearsal	**4**	**5**
6 8:30am Worship 9:40am Learning Hour 11am Worship with Zoom Option	**7** Noon Prayer Group	**8**	**9** 9am Helping Hands 6:15pm Soup Supper 7pm Lent Worship	**10** 9:30am Bible Study 6pm Bells Rehearsal 7pm Choir Rehearsal	**11**	**12**
13 **PALM SUNDAY** 8:30am Worship 9:40am Learning Hour 11am Worship with Zoom Option	**14** Noon Prayer Group	**15** 8pm Support Meeting	**16** 9am Helping Hands	**17** **12:15pm & 7pm Maundy Thursday**	**18** **12:15pm & 7pm Good Friday**	**19** **7pm Easter Vigil**
20 **EASTER SUNDAY** 8:30am Worship 10am Pancake Breakfast and Craft/Egg Hunt 11am Worship with Zoom Option	**21** Noon Prayer Group 7pm Council Meeting **NEWSLETTER ARTICLES DUE**	**22**	**23** 9am Helping Hands	**24** 6pm Bells Rehearsal 7pm Choir Rehearsal **SOUP KITCHEN**	**25**	**26**
27 8:30am Worship 9:40am Learning Hour 11am Worship with Zoom Option	**28** Noon Prayer Group	**29**	**30** 9am Helping Hands			